

Wichita Daily Eagle

EARTH'S SHADOW.

When spirit darkness the bloom of day?
The shadowed roadways and sweeten yields;
A dream rests on the waveless fields;
The world is haggard and gaunt and gray.

The clouds drift wearily over the sky;
The grain is yellow, the hills are bare;
A heartless broods in the quiet air;
The atmosphere is as it passes by.

But yesterday from the flowers were sweet,
The day was bright and the world was young;
And in the even the thrush sang,
And his song was glad and the hours were fleet.

But a misty darkness glimmers at dawn;
The fields today, and the hours are long;
And I hear a dirge in the thrush's song;
For the gloom is the shadow of thee, my heart.

—Chambers' Journal.

IN NORTHERN WILDS.

I was one of ten, five boys and five girls. My father, a clergyman of the English church, was grateful to Providence for having filled his quiver with ten, but I think that in reality he was more grateful they were not eleven.

The problem of his life, the worry of attempting to solve which helped to bring him to his grave, was how to provide a living for all. As he died before a single one of us was provided for, he might have saved himself much anxiety.

I was not the eldest of the family, but the second son. The oldest had been sent to one of the universities, and had followed the very glorious but imprudent profession of his father, without a "living" and without definite hope of obtaining one. I was intended for the Indian civil service, possibly the viceregal ship, but the examiners at Burlington house failed to recognize my fitness for such great possibilities, therefore I determined to emigrate, and a friend of my mother's bearing of my determination secured for me, by personal interest, a berth in the Hudson's Bay company. I was duly engaged and signed a document as long as a deed of transfer, by which I bound myself to serve the company, even to the extent of defending their property with my life.

I sailed to Montreal and presenting my credentials there was soon informed that my services would be required at a post in the far north in charge of one John McIvor. There was also entrusted to my care a pair of fowls, Plymouth Rocks, with the request that I would deliver them safely into the hands of Mr. McIvor. I mention this fact seeing that these fowls played an important part in the events which I am about to relate.

On my arrival at my destination, after sleeping about forty nights under canvas, I was glad of the comfort which reigns at Fort Tripp, due chiefly to the domestic energy of Mrs. McIvor, a bright, pleasant little woman, who seemed out of place in the heart of this "great lone land."

Mr. McIvor was Scotch, as his name would imply, a rough and ready man, with a heart of steel, but which on occasion could be as soft as a woman's. After reading the dispatches which I handed him he said:

"Well, young man, I dinna see what the likes o' ye can do in a country like this. Had na ye better gae back before it is too late?"

"I won't go back, sir, unless you send me back," I answered.

"Ah, weel; boy, stay where you are. It's no always the coarsest twine that stands the biggest strain."

So I entered into my duties without another discouraging word from Mr. McIvor, who, though a perfect martinet in the matter of duty, was kindness itself in the privacy of his own house. There were two other clerks beside myself, who stayed there only during the summer, but who in the fall took charge of small trading establishments, outposts as they are called, returning to Fort Tripp after the winter's hunt was over.

Like most young Englishmen I had formed my ideas of Indians on a Fenimore Cooper basis, but the noble red man fell far short of my ideal. I found him to be a selfish, ungrateful, treacherous savage, whose power for evil was luckily curtailed by his cowardice. I do not say that there are no good points in an Indian's character; we find good points in the character of a dog or a horse, but we do not set the horse or dog on a pedestal and proclaim him all that is perfect; rather we keep clear of his heels and teeth respectively until we know something of his brute's idiosyncrasies. One has to do the same with Indians. Be thoroughly on your guard until you have proved that they can be trusted, and don't trust them then. Mr. McIvor had the most supreme contempt for them—a contempt which he never tried to hide. He used to say:

"They are cowards, arrant cowards, and are afraid o' ye, even like a dog."

It was not long after my arrival that I had a sort of adventure which gave great sport to the other clerks, and even Mr. McIvor himself would occasionally make joking allusions to it.

There was a river running about 100 yards from the store; it was deep and fairly swift. One day as I was working in the store I heard a scream which appeared to come from the river. I ran out and down to the bank, from where I saw an old woman struggling in the water; she had been fishing and her canoe had upset. There were about a dozen Indians looking on, but they only laughed and made not the slightest movement toward helping her. Indians, as a rule, are cruel to the old. They look upon them as incumbrances from which they are not sorry if an accident relieves them. I saw that this poor old thing was in distress and likely to be drowned, so I jumped into the river and swam out to her assistance, not before, however, relieving my mind by abusing soundly the men who would cheerfully have let her sink before their eyes. It was no difficult task to bring the poor old thing ashore, and when I had done so the poor creature followed me as I walked toward the house, crying in earnest tones:

"Meegwitch! meegwitch!" meaning "Thank you, thank you." But I found

this very annoying, for the Indians all laughed at me in my wet clothes and at the old woman, whose clothes were also wet and very thin, as she clung to me, with her incessant "Meegwitch, meegwitch."

The chaff that I suffered from my companions was merciless. I was dubbed "The Knight Errant," "The Heroic Preserver," etc., until I grew sick of it; but to have lost my temper would only have made it worse, so I suffered in silence, and to aggravate my suffering the old woman thought it her duty to present me with every extra large fish that she caught, or if her son-in-law threw her a beaver tail or a moose nose, or any other delicacy especially prized by Indians, they were sure to find their way to my room, and each demonstration of the kind only added to the fun. After a time I began to pick up the Indian language, and as I always had a sneaking regard for the old woman, I often made use of her assistance in acquiring it. In fact we became fast friends, I cementing the friendship by gifts of a little flour, sugar or tea.

I received less chaffing in the winter, for the other clerks had long since taken their departure for their respective outposts, and I was left sole occupant of the clerks' quarters, or "clerks' house," as it was called.

It was coming to the end of March when an event occurred which made me glad that I had pulled the old woman out of the river and treated her with some consideration, if not kindness. The two fowls which I had brought safely to their destination had fairly survived the rigor of the winter. In fact Mrs. McIvor announced one day at dinner that she had found one egg which the hen had laid. But shortly afterward there was a conversation in that household, of two fowls had been found dead, and an Indian dog was quietly making a meal off one of them. The hole whereby he had effected an entrance was stopped up before he could escape, and Mr. McIvor, using his revolver, had the satisfaction of shooting the brute and pitching his body down on the frozen river.

Now it happened that this dog belonged to Match-e-nie, an old Indian claiming to be chief of the band, and who had the reputation of being a conjuror and a cannibal, in consequence of which the Indians all feared him and obeyed him.

He came into the store that evening and spoke to Mr. McIvor thus:

"You pay me for my dog."

"How much?" asked Mr. McIvor.

"Twenty weeg." The Hudson Bay company was at inland posts a standard for value, the name differing in different localities. A weeg equals about fifty cents.

"All right," said McIvor, "I will pay you for your dog if you pay me for my fowls."

"How much?"

"Twenty weeg."

The Indian saw that he was caught, and walked out with a muttered "Kish," meaning, "Hold on, we shall see." Next evening he again came to the store, and said: "There are bad people about; I have seen a Wendigo. You pay me for my dog." (Wendigo: a spirit, a ghost, plant, something uncanny.)

"Get the Wendigo to pay you," said Mr. McIvor, laughing, and again the man shook off. Mr. McIvor knew the Indian nature well, and he said to me:

"That old fellow is up to some devilment. That's what they always do when they want to do an evil trick themselves; pretend that some one else is going to do it. We had better keep a watch on the place; he might set fire to it."

We watched that night, but nothing unusual occurred. After dinner next day, as I was endeavoring to recuperate a bit from night watching by a short snooze, I became aware of a presence, and opening my eyes saw my old woman standing over me, with her finger on her lips to enjoin silence. When she saw that I was awake she whispered hurriedly:

"Run! Indians going to kill trader, kill all white people in the store. Match-e-nie keep trader's wife. You good to old woman. Run!"

And the old woman, casting an anxious look at the door, hobbled away as fast as she could.

I did run, but it was to Mr. McIvor, who was at that moment walking down to the store with his wife.

I breathlessly related to Mr. McIvor as nearly as I could remember them the words of the old woman.

"There's something in it," he said, "and we must be prepared for them. Let us look for our guns. The loons mean business."

His wife, who had heard all, looked frightened, and he turned to her saying: "Which is it, Maggie? Will us, or at the house?"

"With you, John, till the death," she answered boldly.

He gave her a look of admiration and affection, and hastily rose to collect and load our arms.

But we were too late; while we were talking in the office the store had silently filled with Indians, their faces sinister and threatening as they stood ranged up against the high counter. So intent had we been on the discussion that we had not heard the soft tread of their moccasined feet, and there we stood, fairly caught, face to face with death.

It is hard to remember what passed through my mind at that moment. I think that my feelings were more those of indignation than of fear. It vexed me to think of death at the hands of those brutes, an inglorious death, of which but a passing notice might appear in some newspaper, or what was more likely, no notice at all, for the Hudson's Bay company have never cared to publish abroad such little mishaps as these. How different, I thought, would it have been if I were in the army. Then if I had to die my name would be mentioned with pride by my family as well as with regret, and possibly my portrait might appear in The Illustrated London News. So dear to humanity is the praise it receives when no longer alive to hear it, when the pleasure of the praise is but in the anticipation alone.

I watched Mr. McIvor with a certain amount of curiosity, not unmixed with hope, to see what he would do. He did not hesitate a moment, but drawing his wife to his side and passing—

around her waist he said:

"You have come, I believe, to kill me?"

"Yes," answered Match-e-nie, "to kill you as you killed my dog."

"All right," answered Mr. McIvor coolly, "but surely we may as well take a smoke before you kill."

Whether the Indians were swayed by the force of a superior will, or whether they were themselves glad to put off a tragedy which they had pledged themselves to perform, I cannot say; but they

conceivably complied with the request, and each producing his pipe leisurely filled it and commenced to smoke, as if they had come there for nothing else. In the meanwhile Mr. McIvor had quietly drawn toward him a small keg of gunpowder containing about twenty-five pounds. He deftly removed the head; then taking a candle and lighting it with the same match with which he lit his pipe he thrust it down into the powder to within two inches of the flame. So quietly had he done this that the Indians, who were at the moment engaged in lighting their pipes, did not notice it. It was a solemn kind of a smoke. Not another word was spoken on either side. The only thing that woke the dead silence was the occasional "puff, puff" of a pipe that would not draw. I watched the candle with a kind of fascination and saw an ink burn away. I was fearful lest a spark should drop from it, and thus rob us of our full two inches of life; but the candle burned steadily on. There was but half an inch left.

I remember that I wondered if the plover had begun to make their nests in the marshes at home; if my brother Charles had come home for the Easter holidays, and if he would know where the midget thrush always built her nest in the big elm tree; but my reveries were broken by a movement among the Indians and a muttered "non-gom," meaning now.

Match-e-nie arose and with him all the rest of the Indians, with their guns in their hands. Mr. McIvor, who was watching them, made a movement toward the candle in the gunpowder. The movement attracted the attention of the Indians, and they now for the first time comprehended the situation. A minute later there was not an Indian in the store. They had gone out as silently and suddenly as they had come in, leaving us in sole possession, but with the candle burning, dangerously near the powder. Mr. McIvor now carefully approached the keg, and with a steady hand raised the candle from its dangerous candlestick. Not one moment too soon, for scarcely had he lifted it clear off the keg when the few grains of powder which had adhered to it came in contact with the flame and were ignited; but we were saved.

The sudden revelation of feeling took the strength completely out of my legs, and I sat down helplessly on a box, until the voice of Mr. McIvor ordering me to shut the door and look it recalled me to my senses. Mrs. McIvor clasped her husband around the neck and kissed him passionately. He was not unmoved for the moment; but suddenly he burst out laughing, and said in his broadest Scotch:

"Did ye see the look o' the auld diel when he caught sight o' the candle? The pouter, Maggie? But Maggie did not hear him; she had fainted, and the man who had been cheerfully looking death in the face for the last half hour now became as frightened as a child when he saw his wife in a fainting fit. "Will she come around, dy'e think?" he asked in a tone of intense anxiety. There was no need to answer him, for Mrs. McIvor answered the question herself by sitting up and bursting into tears.

For some time afterward we lived prepared for a siege, but the Indians never made sign again of attempting to injure us; in fact they became mighty civil, and in the spring, when communication by water had been re-established, we had no difficulty in securing our friend Match-e-nie, who was safely transported to the far west, where he soon played away and died. Of the old woman who had done us such service I could gather but little information. I never saw her again; she had completely disappeared. It was whispered that Match-e-nie, having found out that she had warmed us, quietly made away with her, so that practically she gave her life for mine. Can it therefore be wondered at that I prize her memory, especially as in her I have found through long experience the one solitary exception to the treacherous ingratitude of the North American Indians?

Shortly after these events Mr. McIvor received charge of a district on the borders of civilization. Nothing would do but that I should accompany him to his new charge, and so favorably did he report of me to headquarters that I rose rapidly in the service, and ere many years had passed was in charge of a district of my own.—C. C. Carr, Buffalo Express.

A Newspaper Kneelomania.

There is an old, gray haired, venerable appearing gentleman who is often seen about the corridors of the Hoffman house and the Fifth Avenue hotel. He is a newspaper kneelomania. Just leave a paper lying on a seat and watch him. He gets up, looks about unconcernedly and soon sits down next to the paper. Carelessly he picks it up and glances through it.

After a few minutes, if no one observes him, he folds the paper carefully, puts it in his pocket, then calls for an imported Henry Clay and pays for it from a good sized wallet at the cigar stand. In the course of the evening he usually gets all the papers, then disappears.—New York Journal.

Mass of Meteors.

The particles of matter producing shooting stars may be astonishingly minute. In a recent investigation Mr. C. C. Hutchins has found that on the supposition that the rays of a meteor have the same ratio of visible to total energy as those of the standard candle the mass of a meteor at a distance of fifty miles, having a magnitude equal to Vega and a velocity of twenty-five miles a second, would be about four and a half grains if it continued two seconds. A lump of the Emmett county, Ia., iron meteorite burned in an electric current gave ten times the light of the candle; hence the mass of a meteor giving the light of a first magnitude star moving with parabolic velocity, and lasting two seconds, is less than a half grain.—Arkansas Traveler.

The History of Pepper.

The value of pepper in cooking seems to have been known long ago. Its use as a medicine was common in the days of Hippocrates, who applied it, moistened with alcohol, to the skin of his patients. Just as sugar and tea have been in past times so dear as only to be within the reach of the wealthy, so pepper was in the Middle Ages a very costly commodity. So much was it valued that a small packet was at that time deemed a suitable present to offer a great person. Common or black pepper is now grown in many tropical countries. It is a climbing plant some twelve feet high, bearing fruit of a bright red color the size of a pea, which, when dried, turns black.—Exchange.

His Father's Old Teeth.

Little James had been imparting to the minister the important and cheerful information that his father had got a new set of false teeth.

"Indeed, James," replied the minister indulgently. "And what will he do with the old set?"

"Oh, I s'pose," replied little James, "they'll cut 'em down and make me wear 'em."—New York Ledger.

The Water Barometer in St. Jacques' tower, Paris, has a glass tube over forty-one feet long and about three-quarters of an inch in diameter—the largest yet made.

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